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SOCIALIZING THE MATERIALS AND METHODS OF EDUCATION ¹

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- I. Social efficiency of the actual and ideal types, as the dominant aim of education, and, therefore, as the dominant aim of all school work, is acceptable to all persons who are concerned in the process of education, viz. :
 1. The philosophers, idealists, materialists, pragmatists, etc.
 2. The statesmen—who seek social welfare—in office or out.
 3. The public—who pays the bills, and furnishes the pupils.
 4. The politicians—who echo the public.
 5. The schoolmasters—who actually do the work, for it is a concrete and progressively realizable ideal that vitalizes every aspect of school work.
- II. The deepest law of human nature is: *One becomes by being.*
 1. Skill grows out of successive and repeated co-ordinations.
 2. Qualities of mind are the outcome of processes.
 3. The possibilities or potentialities bound up in a child at birth become realized or actualized *only by the activities of that child.*
- III. These activities of the individual are of two types:
 1. Those activities due to stress from within—unfolding or developing activities.
 2. Those activities due to stimuli from without—infolding or integrating activities.

¹ Syllabus of address given at the Schoolmasters Club, Peoria, October 12, 1907.

Our conception of *cause* should be so modified as to include the mutual interconnectedness of things—sound—pencil—desk—air.

- IV. The principle in III (above) yields the corollary that the activity of the mind, whether in the form of development or in the form of integration, is educative.
- V. The fundamental problem of education and of the school is so to condition children that through their developing and integrating activities they may progressively become more socially efficient.
- VI. The old idea of school work was to select certain *fundamentals* of effective living and present these to the child with the hope that he might some day come to appreciate their value through his use of them.
- VII. The present idea of school work (or, at least, the one to be defended this morning) is to select certain significant aspects of the life about the child and present them in such a way that he progressively grows into a deeper appreciation of them—and thus comes to the *fundamentals*—to the *grounds of his own living*.
- VIII. To state the idea differently, a child cannot really *study* anything except in so far as he can, through his own mental activities that are connected with it, secure *significance*, and significance is meaning, is felt mental relationship.
- IX. The life of the child is inevitably matrixed in social relationship (even the nature about which he cares most is that which is connected with social uses and social estimates), and the greatest growth of the child into social efficiency is clearly in building up a wider and deeper significance (to him) of those relationships that radiate from his present social life into the life around him. (The line of least resistance is also the line of greatest educative effort.)
- X. The so-called “subjects” of the curriculum are social products—are aspects of a past and existing social life,

and have their values for education because of the increased social efficiency which their mastery confers on one.

- XI. It follows (from the two propositions just preceding) that the "subjects" of the curriculum should receive an organization which is social and psychological rather than logical. This means that the child should approach the subject from that aspect of it which connects himself with others, and should proceed in it in accordance with his own ability to gain increased significance. (Wherever there is a priority of relationship which is necessary to mastery, the social and psychological organization is also logical.)
- XII. The logical organization should be a secondary movement by the child, as it has been in the race, rather than a primary one.
- XIII. Only in this way can school education be *genuinely practical* at every stage of its process.
- XIV. The primary method of learning, in the race as in the child, is involuntary experience which includes spontaneous, impulsive, and instinctive movements, and suggestion.
- XV. The derived form of learning, in the child as in the race, is planned (or purposed) activity, including imitation, invention, and discovery.
- XVI. Imitation is the basal form of social transmission.
- XVII. Invention and discovery are the basal forms of social progress.
- XVIII. Since society is progressive, social efficiency demands that the child become inventive and discoverative.
- XIX. The great thing in elementary and secondary education is to bring the child up to the present level of society, by making use of his tendencies to develop and by integration, in such a way that he is efficient and progressive.

XX. What is meant by socializing the materials and methods of education may be illustrated by a consideration of nature-study:

1. Criteria for the selection of materials:

- a) Select materials which reveal the controls which men have developed in their efforts to satisfy their felt needs.
- b) Select laws or uniformities which men have discovered and to which they conform in order that they may the more advantageously satisfy their felt wants.
- c) Select materials which have gained a social significance because of the curiosity and aesthetic activities of men.

2. Criteria for organization of materials:

- a) Begin with that aspect of the material which already has greatest significance to the child.
- b) Proceed in the order of the questions that arise in the child's mind.
- c) Provide for elaboration (working over) so that the temporary mental organization brought about by the child's perception of relationship (catching on, understanding, apperception) may become relatively permanent mental structure.

3. Criteria of method:

- a) Awaken in the child a sense of the value, to self or to the race, of the material to be studied.
- b) Arouse the inventive and discoverative attitudes toward the selected material.
- c) Provide abundant situations which require the communication or expression of the relations learned.
- d) Cultivate through construction (all forms of actual as opposed to symbolic doing) the social values of, the social estimate of, and the social attitude toward, the materials dealt with.